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ORIGIN NEA-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	A-00	CIAE-00	COME-00
	INL-00	DODE-00	DOTE-00	PERC-00	PDI-00	DS-00	DHSE-00
	EUR-00	E-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VCI-00	OBO-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	MFLO-00	MOFM-00
	MOF-00	M-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIG-00	OMB-00
	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	P-00	SCT-00	D-00
	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	CBP-00	R-00
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O 271911Z MAR 09  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 029895

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2019  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: PLIGHT OF IRAQI WIDOWS A PRIORITY  
CONCERN FOR THE SECRETARY

REF: A. CHUNG-RIDDLE EMAIL OF MARCH 13  
[B](#). BAGHDAD 492  
[C](#). BAGHDAD 543

Classified By: NEA DAS Richard Schmierer for E.O. 12985 reasons  
1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraphs  
4-7.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: NEA/I commends Post's reporting on the plight  
of Iraq's war widows and developments within the Ministry  
of State for Women's Affairs (MoSWA) on this and other  
issues that affect Iraqi women (ref 492, 543). The  
Department is exploring opportunities to assist this  
vulnerable population, including through the establishment  
of a "Secretary's Program to Assist Iraqi Widows."  
In addition, we are looking to capitalize on the  
successes of existing programs that can help specifically  
address these pressing needs. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (C) The Department understands that the Government of  
Iraq's (GOI) widow stipend program is plagued with an  
unwieldy registration process and a shortage of staff,  
capacity and funding. These problems include, but are  
not limited to, registration challenges (e.g.,  
difficulty in obtaining the spousal death certificate  
needed to register) and GOI lack of funds to pay  
stipends to the majority of registered recipients.

[1](#)4. (C) In light of the Secretary's strong interest in  
this issue, information and action on the following items  
is requested:  
-- Convey to the GOI the increasing international  
concerns about the treatment of widows;  
-- Urge the GOI to address inefficiencies with the widows  
stipend program and any other GOI widow and women's  
assistance programs;  
-- Encourage the appropriate levels of the GOI, including  
the Prime Minister's Office and the Minister of Finance,  
to allocate the necessary amount of funds needed for MoSWA  
(Note: Post is requested to confirm reports that MoSWA  
received approximately 85% less in the 2009 budget than  
in the 2008 budget);  
-- Identify specific challenges within the Ministry of  
Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to distribute  
stipend funds, as well as obtain information on the  
steps (and bottlenecks) of the registration process;  
-- Encourage Provincial Reconstruction Teams to  
increase the amount of Quick Response Fund projects for  
widows,  
including for projects that would provide stipend

registration information province-wide; and,  
-- Obtain information on any current or planned USG and/or  
GOI initiatives that specifically address how to counter  
AQI's ability to recruit suicide bombers from among  
widows of insurgents.

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USAID, MNF-I AND FORMER MINISTER OF MoSWA INITIATIVES  
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¶15. (SBU) We understand that USAID is currently assessing  
its ability to provide support to widows through various  
mechanisms; an update on these activities is requested.

¶16. (C) Following the resignation of the former Minister  
of MoSWA over staffing and funding issues, the former  
Minister reportedly received three commitments from  
international donors as well as a list of women volunteers  
to serve in MoSWA. As a result she reportedly sought to  
withdraw her resignation. The Department requests clarity  
on this situation as well as the feasibility of the MoSWA  
receiving and effectively using donor assistance under its  
existing leadership.

¶17. (C) MNF-I has informally reported that the Iraqi  
Strategic Women's Initiative Committee is considering  
lobbying the GOI to elevate MoSWA to a full ministry,  
or alternatively to push for a separate National Women's  
Commission that would be supported by the Council of  
Representatives. The Embassy's position on this  
initiative is requested, as well as an assessment  
of the feasibility and challenges of such proposals.

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USG ASSISTANCE AND THE PROPOSED "SECRETARY,S PROGRAM  
TO ASSIST IRAQI WIDOWS"  
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¶18. (C) NEA/I intends to request \$3.5 million in the FY'09  
Supplemental request for the Marla Ruzicka War Victims Fund  
and an additional \$5 million for a proposed "Secretary's  
Program to Assist Iraqi Widows," which would be used to  
promote the work of NGOs with widows in the provinces as  
well as promote and assist widow stipend registration.  
NEA will work with USAID and Embassy POL and ECON sections  
to further develop this program in the coming weeks.  
CLINTON